CIA CPAS | MEAB 83-060

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OUTGOING MESSAGE

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MIDDLE EAST AFRICA BRIEF OCPAS MEAB 83-060 FOR 28 MARCH.

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3. PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: PRESIDENT ZIA'S VIEWS

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3. PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: PRESIDENT ZIA'S VIEWS

//PRESIDENT ZIA BELIEVES HE IS UNDER INCREASING DOMESTIC PRESSURE TO SETTLE THE AFGHANISTAN ISSUE. [redacted]

//ZIA IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANY REGIME IN KABUL, PROVIDED AN AGREEMENT LEADS TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN AND THE REMOVAL OF AFGHAN REFUGEES FROM PAKISTAN. HE [redacted] BELIEVES TWO MAJOR PAKISTANI OPPOSITION PARTIES THAT WANT DIRECT TALKS WITH KABUL RECENTLY HAVE INCREASED THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT AND IS CONCERNED THAT PUBLIC OPINION IS SHIFTING ON THE ISSUE.// [redacted]

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//MOREOVER, ZIA BELIEVES BOTH PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS WITHIN PAKISTAN COULD JOIN AGAINST HIM. HE ALSO FEELS MORE ISOLATED ON AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE OF WORRY OVER RELATIONS WITH IRAN.// [redacted]

COMMENT: // IF ZIA BELIEVES HIS INTERNAL POSITION IS WEAKENING, HE MAY DECIDE ON A TACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF FLEXIBILITY AT THE FORTHCOMING ROUND OF UN-SPONSORED TALKS ON AFGHANISTAN IN GENEVA. THE PRESENCE OF 2.8 MILLION AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN IS A GROWING DOMESTIC ISSUE. ISLAMABAD IS AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE REFUGEES WILL

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NOT RETURN UNLESS THE SOVIETS FIRST WITHDRAW AND THAT ANY SETTLEMENT ALSO WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO PAKISTAN'S FRIENDS--INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA AND CHINA.// [redacted]

//PAKISTAN'S TIES WITH IRAN HAVE BEEN SLOWLY IMPROVING, DESPITE DIFFERENCES ON THE AFGHANISTAN TALKS. NONETHELESS, SHIA CHARGES THAT ISLAMABAD FAVORED THE SUNNIS IN RECENT RIOTS IN KARACHI COULD COOL RELATIONS.// [redacted]

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